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General and complete disarmament

Letter dated 30 June 1998 from the Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to refer to the letter dated 9 June 1998 from the Permanent Representatives of Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Slovenia, South Africa and Sweden to the United Nations (A/53/138), transmitting a joint declaration on nuclear disarmament adopted by their Ministers for Foreign Affairs, and to transmit herewith the text of a letter from Mrs. Vasundhara Raje, Minister of State for External Affairs of India, addressed to the eight Foreign Ministers (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex issued as a document of the General Assembly under item 72 of the preliminary list.

(*Signed*) Kamalesh **Sharma**

* A/53/50.

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Annex

Letter dated 16 June 1998 from the Minister of State for External Affairs of India addressed to the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Slovenia, South Africa and Sweden

1. I am writing to you in connection with the initiative, taken by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Slovenia, South Africa and Sweden, contained in the declaration entitled "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: the need for a new agenda". I have carefully read the declaration and find in it a number of valuable suggestions that deserve consideration by the international community.

2. India has enjoyed close bilateral relations with your country, and we have in the past worked together for the cause of global nuclear disarmament in different multilateral forums. We value this association and consider the declaration a timely reminder that despite nearly 100 resolutions of the General Assembly reflecting the will of the international community, decisive steps for creating a nuclear-weapon-free world still have not been taken.

3. As you are aware, India has been in the forefront of calls for nuclear disarmament. We were the first to call for a complete halt to all nuclear testing as a means of preparing the ground for negotiations for prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons more than four decades ago. In subsequent years, we put forward, individually and collectively with other like-minded countries, a number of initiatives intended to move the process forward, including an action plan for creating a nuclear-weapon-free world. This highlights our shared conviction that global elimination of nuclear weapons is the only way to enhance global security. Partial measures for non-proliferation will not work. The road map is clear – we have dealt with two other categories of weapons of mass destruction, namely, chemical weapons and biological weapons, by negotiating multilateral treaties that are comprehensive, universal and non-discriminatory. We need to adopt a similar approach to deal with nuclear weapons.

4. I am aware of your concern at the recent nuclear tests undertaken by India. I am also aware that your country is a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, a treaty that India has long regarded as discriminatory and not serving her national security interests. India's becoming a nuclear-weapon State was inevitable because the non-proliferation regime neither led to nuclear disarmament nor prevented proliferation in our region. We are, however, deeply conscious of the fact that lasting global security can only be achieved through global nuclear disarmament. Therefore, notwithstanding our differences in approach, we share a common objective. I would like to assure you that India's commitment to taking initiatives and supporting initiatives that can lead to genuine forward movement for a nuclear-weapon-free world remains undiluted.

5. We remain ready to cooperate with you in collective efforts to ensure that the international community will witness the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free world in the coming millennium and the establishment of an equitable non-discriminatory, non-violent and lasting international security order.

(*Signed*) Vasundhara **Raje**